

Mormon Midwife: the 1846-1888 Diaries of Patty Bartlett Sessions

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ments. They write also of a sister serving parishioners as a Unitarian minister, of a mother's medical work with her neighbors, of teachers, their study and work in Iowa's classrooms. The book closes with a report from Jennie McCowen, M.D., on Iowa's working women, who in 1885 topped 80,000. Most women worked in professional and personal services as teachers, seamstresses, domestics, and doctors, but others worked in agriculture, trade, and transportation, and almost 8,500 in manufacturing, milling, and mining.

Prairie Voices will hold a stellar place in the published collections of pioneer life. Almost without exception, each writer captures readers' imaginations, making them a close companion in the trials and rewards of pioneer life in Iowa. Credit for the success of the volume belongs both to the writers themselves and to Riley, who selected the best and then edited each work to bring into clear relief the internal and external voices of Iowa's women pioneers.

Mormon Midwife: The 1846-1888 Diaries of Patty Bartlett Sessions, edited by Donna Toland Smart. Life Writings of Frontier Women, volume 2. Logan: Utah State University Press, 1997. xiv, 457 pp. Illustrations, notes, appendixes, bibliography, index. \$29.95 cloth.

REVIEWED BY BILOINE WHITING YOUNG, ST. PAUL, MINNESOTA

Mormon Midwife contains the complete diaries of Mormondom's most famous midwife, elucidated by comprehensive notes and explanations by Donna Smart. Beginning in February 1846 and continuing until May 1888, Patty Sessions, a compulsive record keeper, wrote daily entries in her diaries. Those diaries cover the Mormon exodus from Nauvoo, the trek across Iowa in the middle of winter, life in Winter Quarters at Florence, Nebraska, the journey across the plains to Utah, and the early years of pioneer life in Salt Lake City.

It is hard to imagine a better person to have kept a diary of those years and events. Patty Sessions was deeply involved in the events unfolding around her. First a midwife, delivering babies weekly, she was active in Mormon women's societies, speaking in tongues, and bestowing blessings. She doctored the sick with herbal remedies, supported herself through a variety of astute business activities during her husband's long absences with his other wives, and had contact with almost every person of note in early Mormondom, the names of whom she recorded in her diaries.

Her record is straightforward and factual. "23 monday we got canvas for a tent sewed some on it 24 tuesday stormed all day fin-

ished sewing it together Mr. Sessions went to get tent poles and other things." Patty did not bother with the niceties of punctuation and referred to her husband as "Mr. Sessions." Occasionally her emotions erupted into her diary, as when she struggled to come to terms with polygamy and Mr. Sessions's participation in it.

Donna Smart's copious and well-researched notes make the diaries understandable. She identifies each of the hundreds of individuals Sessions names and explains their relationship to other persons and to the Mormon saga. The notes are written from a distinctly Mormon perspective (the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints is referred to twice as a "splinter group"), and Smart mentions Mormon beliefs and practices with only limited explanations.

Barely 59 of the 367 pages of the diaries recount the difficult winter journey across Iowa through mud, snow, and freezing rain. Though much shorter in miles, this portion of the trek to Utah claimed far more lives and took much longer than did the dash from Nebraska to Utah. Patty wrote graphic details of the struggle to keep the straggling band moving and together.

This is not a book to curl up with on a winter night. Much is repetitious and tedious. Though students of the westward movement may glean useful bits and pieces, Patty's diaries will be most meaningful to Mormons who seek additional details of their epic journey—in this case from an active woman's life and perspective.

Wisconsin in the Civil War: The Home Front and the Battle Front, 1861–1865, by Frank L. Klement. Madison: State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1997. ix, 141 pp. Illustrations, maps, bibliography, index. \$30.00 cloth.

REVIEWED BY LORI A. LISOWSKI, NATIONAL ARCHIVES AND RECORDS ADMINISTRATION

Wisconsin in the Civil War, with its oversized format, extensive illustrations from the collections of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin, and narrative without footnotes, is more of a coffee-table book than a scholarly treatise on the Badger State's role in the Civil War. Nevertheless, the late Frank Klement was "reluctant to concede" that his readable survey of Wisconsin's history during this pivotal period is "not 'scholarly,' if only because it represents the distillation of a lifetime spent researching, writing, and thinking about the Civil War" (v–vi). *Wisconsin in the Civil War* was first published as an essay in the 1962 *Wisconsin Blue Book*. Beginning in 1993, Klement, the author

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